

# **Michigan Department of Education**

## **School Nutrition Programs**

### **Getting Started in the State of Michigan: 10 Items for New Sponsors**

#### **What are School Nutrition Programs?**

School Nutrition Programs include the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program for Children (SMP), and AfterSchool Snack Program (ASSP). These federally assisted meal and snack programs operate in public and nonprofit private schools and residential childcare institutions. They provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free lunches, breakfasts, snacks, and milk to children each school day and during the summer months.

The Food and Nutrition Service administers these programs at the Federal level. In Michigan, the Department of Education administers programs through the Office of School Support Services and the School Nutrition Programs (SNP) unit. SNP operates through agreements with School Food Authorities (SFAs). The SFA is the governing body responsible for the administration of one or more schools and is the local agency that has the authority to enter into a legal agreement with the State administering agency to operate the School Nutrition Programs.

#### **1. Application and Agreement with Michigan Department of Education (MDE):**

Each sponsor that would like to participate in School Nutrition Programs must apply to MDE SNP via the Michigan Electronic Grants System Plus (MEGS+), a web-based application. The application collects information about the SFA and school food service operation. After the initial application and agreement are completed, all returning sponsors must complete a renewal application in MEGS+ at the start of each school year. Under these agreements, SFAs are responsible for operating the School Nutrition Programs in schools under their jurisdiction. A detailed document is available to guide sponsors in this process. New sponsors must also upload documentation supporting meal pattern requirement compliance, formerly referred to as 6-cent certification. For questions regarding the application process, please contact [mde-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov](mailto:mde-schoolnutrition@michigan.gov).

#### **2. Food Service contract(s):**

The SFA may choose to carry out the responsibility of operating School Nutrition Programs in three ways: operate its meal service without assistance (self-operating); contract with a food service management company (FSMC) to manage the food service operation; or contract with a commercial entity to purchase vended meals. A competitive procurement is required when the SFA chooses a FSMC or vended meals.

MDE can assist the SFA in the procurement process. Procurement of a food service contract takes time, so SFAs should plan accordingly. The structure and scope of services to be included in the food service contract must be considered by the SFA.

Key questions/considerations: Does the school district want a food service management company contract or a vended meal contract? How many sites will be included? Will it be a

multi-award contract? What are the scope of the services to be requested? What is the estimated student participation? What might the aggregate total of the entire food service contract be in the first year?

The procurement process includes a pre-review requirement and may require post-review and prior approval from MDE depending on the procurement method used. MDE will guide the SFA through the procurement process.

Katherine Fuller is the contact for the procurement of all food service meal contracts as noted above and is available to provide technical assistance. Contact her at 517-373-4017 or [fullerk@michigan.gov](mailto:fullerk@michigan.gov).

3. **Alternate Agreements between SFAs:**

Under an Alternate SFA Agreement, legal and financial authority is officially transferred from one SFA to the other. The contract between the SFAs must state that SFA number 1 is accepting total legal and financial responsibility for the newly incorporated School Food Authority's (SFA number 2's) meal program(s). This includes paying overclaims as a result of administrative reviews, distributing USDA commodities and complying with program regulations. The contract must state that the incorporated School Food Authority (SFA number 2) is relinquishing its authority to operate the specified school meal program(s) to SFA number 1.

4. **USDA Foods:**

SFAs participating in NSLP are eligible to receive United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Foods, also called commodities, in their second year of operation. MDE uses the prior school year's lunch claims to determine the amount of entitlement a district will receive to purchase foods procured by USDA. Schools districts that are new to the NSLP do not receive USDA Foods their first year as entitlement is calculated and food ordered several months prior to the beginning of the school year. School districts must be participating in the NSLP and join a consortia to receive USDA Foods. For any questions on USDA Foods, contact Jaime Malnar at 517-335-3792 or [malnarj1@michigan.gov](mailto:malnarj1@michigan.gov).

5. **Free and Reduced Price Meals for non-Community Eligibility Provision sponsors:**

All schools participating in NSLP or SBP must make free and reduced price meals available to eligible children. All schools and institutions participating in the free milk option of the SMP must make free milk available to eligible children. At the beginning of school, information letters must be distributed to the households of children attending the school. This letter informs families about available Child Nutrition Programs and that free or reduced-price meals or free milk may be available to children. The letter must also contain information including, but not limited to, instructions for families on how to apply and income eligibility guidelines.

Each SFA is responsible for collecting and processing free and reduced-price applications and alerting families of resulting determinations. The [Eligibility Manual for School Meals](#)<sup>i</sup> provides detailed information on this process.

6. **Community Eligibility Provision:**

Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) allows schools, groups of schools, or an entire district to serve each student a free breakfast and free lunch. To qualify, the school/group/district must have an Identified Student Percentage (ISP) of 40% or higher. Identified Students are those that are directly certified, homeless, migrant, runaway or foster. Meals are no longer counted by free/reduced/paid student eligibility status. Instead, the ISP is multiplied by a factor of 1.6. For example, an ISP of 50%, multiplied by 1.6 equals 80%. In this case, 80% of all the reimbursable meals served would be reimbursed at the free rate and 20% at the paid rate. The higher the ISP, the more cost effective for the district. When an ISP is at 62.5%, after multiplying by the 1.6 factor, 100% of the meals served would receive reimbursement at the free rate.

7. **Meal Pattern Requirements:**

School meals must meet meal pattern and nutrition standards based on the latest Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The current meal pattern increases the availability of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in the school menu. The meal pattern's dietary specifications set specific calorie limits to ensure age-appropriate meals for grades K-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Other meal enhancements include gradual reductions in the sodium content of the meals (sodium targets must be reached by School Year (SY) 2014-15, SY 2017-18, and SY 2022-23). While school lunches must meet Federal meal requirements, decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made by local SFAs.

8. **Counting and Claiming Meals:**

Federal reimbursement is provided for each meal that meets program requirements and is served to an eligible student. To obtain this reimbursement, school personnel must accurately count, record, and claim the number of meals actually served to students by category (free, reduced-price, and paid). Additionally, the number of meals served and claimed for reimbursement must have adequate documentation on file to support the claim. Different procedures can be used to count, record, and claim the number of meals. A sponsor should assess what type of Point of Service/counting system will best meet the needs of the operation. It may be a roster system, ticket system, or electronic Point of Service system.

9. **Administrative Review:**

The Administrative Review provides a comprehensive evaluation of school nutrition programs to ensure that participating SFAs comply with all program requirements. Both Critical and General Areas of Review are included in this process. Critical areas include Meal Access and Reimbursement and Nutritional Quality and Meal Pattern. General areas include Resource Management and General Program Compliance like Civil Rights, Local School Wellness Policy, Reporting and Recordkeeping and program outreach. Other Federal programs reviewed in applicable schools include Afterschool Snacks, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, and Special Milk Program. MDE must conduct Administrative Reviews of all schools participating in the NSLP and/or SBP at least once during each three-year review cycle period, provided that each SFA is reviewed at least once every 4 years. New sponsors will be reviewed in the first year of participation.

10. **Technical Assistance and Training Opportunities:**

MDE's SNP provides multiple opportunities for free and low cost training for SFAs. Technical assistance is available for all program areas. Resources are available on the MDE SNP website, USDA website, and many partner websites. MDE SNP staff are available by email and phone to provide support and answers to questions not found elsewhere.

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<sup>i</sup> <http://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/cn/EliMan.pdf>